

VZCZCXRO6033  
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHSM #0750/01 3121736  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 071736Z NOV 08  
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3876  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000750

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [AF](#) [SW](#)

SUBJECT: BILDT VISITS OFFICIALS AND TROOPS AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: A/DCM Marc Koehler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary  
-----

¶1. (C) Swedish FM Bildt paid his first visit to Afghanistan October 29-31, 2008. On this "fact-finding" mission, he met with all levels of government in Kabul, including Foreign Minister Spanta and Minister of Interior Atmar, and with Balkh Province Governor Atta when he visited Sweden's PRT in northern Afghanistan. Spanta spoke positively about the Afghan-Pakistan relationship; Atmar discussed his anti-corruption mandate with Bildt; and Atta asked the Swedes to send more aid directly to the provinces, instead of routing it through Kabul.

Bildt in Listening Mode  
-----

¶2. (C) Swedish FM Carl Bildt visited Afghanistan on October 29-31, 2008. On November 5, MFA Afghan Desk Officer Mattias Otterstedt briefed Poloffs on Bildt's visit. Bildt was accompanied by State Secretary Bjorn Lyrvall, Sweden's Ambassador to Iraq Niclas Trouve, Otterstedt and two cabinet staffers. Otterstedt said this was Bildt's first trip to Afghanistan and he was in a fact-finding and listening mode. Now that Bildt has seen the country and spoken with the key players, "he is more likely to generate ideas," according to Otterstedt, who said he based this statement on experience from previous Bildt trips.

Foreign Minister Spanta on Good Governance  
-----

¶3. (C) FM Spanta told Bildt over lunch that the international community must "increase pressure" on Afghanistan to continue reforms on good governance and human rights. Otterstedt commented that Spanta was "playing" the Swedes by appealing to their respect for human rights in order to increase Sweden's support. Spanta told Bildt that Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan has improved and urged Bildt to increase support to Pakistan also. Otterstedt commented that a "new window" of Pakistan-Afghan cooperation should be explored and the United Kingdom is trying to increase Pakistan's presence on the EU agenda.

Interior Minister Atmar to Tackle Corruption  
-----

¶4. (C) Bildt also met with Minister of the Interior Atmar, a "dynamic Pashtun," who was only six days into his job. (Note: Atmar was previously Minister for Rural Development and Minister of Education. End note.) Atmar told Bildt that he has a clear mandate to root out corruption within the police and repair the Ministry of Interior so it can better provide logistical services to the police. The Interior Minister said he wants help from EU and U.S. on conducting operations, such as anti-corruption investigations, according to Otterstedt.

¶5. (C) Other meetings included: a one-on-one with Karzai (Otterstedt had no read-out); Defense Minister Wardak regarding the Afghan National Army; Speaker of Lower House; parliamentarians; the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission; the Swedish Committee on Afghanistan and other think tanks. Throughout, Bildt stressed the need to talk with the Taliban, but the international community's "red lines" must be clear, he said, especially to the Afghan government.

#### Elections

¶6. (C) Otterstedt reported that Bildt, in a number of meetings, expressed concern that during the 2009 elections many voters will be prevented by security conditions from voting, and the majority of those voters will likely be Pashtun due to their geographical remoteness. Bildt reportedly said if ten percent of voters cannot vote, that is acceptable, but if so many as 30 percent of all registered voters cannot vote, then the new government's legitimacy would be put into question. Otterstedt admitted the Sweden does not have a clear idea how to improve the election process.

#### Mazar-e Sharif

¶7. (C) Visiting Sweden's PRT in northern Afghanistan, Bildt met with Governor Atta in Mazar-e Sharif. Otterstedt said the meeting between Atta and Bildt was collegial, though Atta asked for more resources and continued his criticisms of the

STOCKHOLM 00000750 002 OF 002

Swedish-led PRT for its failure to provide substantial improvements (reftel). Otterstedt said that although Atta wants to control the development funds allocated to the North, it is better to let the Afghan authorities in Kabul work to dole out the funds with the Afghan flag attached than to have the Swedes dole out the funds with a Swedish flag. Sweden wants the Afghan government to take credit for the projects it implements with Swedish funds, and therefore will continue to earmark no more than 25 percent of all its aid for the four Northern provinces in its PRT. "What matters is capacity building, not Sweden getting credit," Otterstedt stated. He added that Sweden's ability to earmark funds is limited because the Afghan Minister of Finance wants flexibility to use the funds.

WOOD